

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 T-03 OMB-01 AID-20 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01

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R 100815 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8499

INFO AMCONGEN BIEN HOA

AMCONGEN DANANG

AMCONGEN CAN THO

AMCONGEN NHA TRANG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 3921

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT HUONG SPEAKS ON CORRUPTION

1. SUMMARY: ON MAR 8 VICE PRESIDENT TRAN VAN HUONG DELIVERED A RADIO AND TELEVISION ADDRESS ON CORRUPTION IN WHICH HE WARNED THAT THE COMMUNISTS WOULD SEEK TO SOW DISUNITY IN THE RVN BY FOSTERING CORRUPTION AND MOUNTING CAMPAIGNS OF SLANDER AGAINST HONEST OFFICIALS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CORRUPTION CONTINUES TO EXIST, BUT SPOKE IN VERY GENERAL TERMS IN DISCUSSING MEANS TO ERADICATE IT. WHILE HIS SPEECH SHOWED THAT THERE IS NO LACK OF AWARENESS IN THE GVN OF CORRUPTION, THE VICE PRESIDENT OFFERED A FEW ASSURANCES OF CONCRETE ACTION AGAINST CORRUPT ELEMENTS. END SUMMARY.

2. RVN VICE PRESIDENT TRAN VAN HUONG DELIVERED A LENGTHY RADIO AND TELEVISION ADDRESS ON THE EVENING OF MAR 8 IN WHICH HE DISCUSSED CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER IN THE RVN. (FULL TEXT REPORTED FBIS S-090325). THE OCCASION OF HIS SPEECH WAS TO REVIEW THE PAST YEAR OF ANTI- CORRUPTION ACTIVITY BY HIS OFFICE AND TO REPORT PLANS TO STEP UP THESE ACTIVITIES " IN THE COMING PHASE".

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3. HE WARNED THAT IN THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE WITH THE COMMUNISTS, THE LATTER " WILL SEEK TO SOW SUSPICION, HATRED, AND DISUNITY" IN NATIONAL RANKS BY FOSTERING " CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER" SO THE PEOPLE " WILL LOSE FAITH IN OUR REGIME". THEY WILL " DISGUISE THEMSELVES AS WICKED OFFICIALS WHO EXPLOIT THE INNOCENT PEOPLE", AND MIGHT USE EVERYTHING, " INCLUDING MONEY", TO INSINUATE THEMSELVES INTO THE NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE. HE ALSO WARNED THAT THE ENEMY WILL LAUNCH CAMPAIGNS OF SLANDER AGAINST HONEST OFFICIALS TO DISCREDIT THE GOVERNMENT AND WEAKEN THE NATIONAL CAUSE.

4. THE VICE PRESIDENT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT " CORRUPTION STILL PREVAILS IN OUR COUNTRY", PARTLY AS A RESULT OF SOME 20 YEARS OF WAR. HE ASSERTED THAT IT MUST BE ELIMINATED, BUT SPOKE ONLY IN VERY GENERAL TERMS IN URGING " GOODWILL" AND RESOLUTION TO MINIMIZE THE " CAUSES OF CORRUPTION", " IMPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY" AND DEAL WITH " THE PROBLEM OF PERSONNEL". HIS CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE RVN CAN ELIMINATE CORRUPTION " IF WE HAVE DETERMINATION".

5. THE VICE PRESIDENT DEVOTED OVER ONE- FOURTH OF HIS 37- MINUTE SPEECH TO DISCUSSING THE LETTERS WHICH HIS OFFICE HAS RECEIVED ACCUSING PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF CORRUPT PRACTICES. HE STATED THAT " MOST" OF THESE LETTERS HAVE EITHER BEEN ANONYMOUS OR TOO UNSPECIFIC, AND THEREFORE HAVE NOT WARRANTED ACTION. HE URGED CITIZENS TO WRITE TO HIM, BUT IN DOING SO TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES FULLY AND TO DETAIL THEIR CHARGES. HE PROMISED SWIFT PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE MAKING FALSE ACCUSATIONS , SAYING THAT " WE MUST BE VIGILANT SO THAT OUR GOODWILL AND DEEDS WILL NOT BECOME A WEAPON FOR THE ENEMY".

6. IN SPEAKING OF FUTURE PROGRAMS AGAINST CORRUPTION, THE VICE PRESIDENT AGAIN SPOKE IN GENERAL TERMS TO PROMISE " AN ENLARGED AND MORE EFFECTIVE PROGRAM OF ACTION" AGAINST CORRUPTION IN THE COMING YEAR. HE PROMISED TO CONTINUE PAST PROGRAMS AND TO ASK PRESIDENT THIEU TO ESTABLISH A " STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE REPRESSION OF CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER", WHICH HE, THE VICE PRESIDENT, WILL SUPERVISE. AS DESCRIBED, THIS COMMITTEE WILL OVERSEE AND ADVISE CORRUPTION REPRESSION ACTIVITIES BY GVN EXECUTIVE AGENCIES, WILL SET FORTH " EFFECTIVE, TIMELY, AND COMPREHENSIVE GENERAL REMEDIAL MEASURES AND WILL CLOSELY FOLLOW THE SITUATION, THE TIMING AND CONFIDENTIAL

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRUGGLE".

7. COMMENT: THE VICE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH SHOWS THAT THERE IS NO LACK OF AWARENESS IN HIGH GVN CIRCLES OF CORRUPTION AND THE LIABILITY IT REPRESENTS FOR THE GVN IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THE SPEECH WAS COUCHED IN EXTREMELY GENERAL TERMS AND OFFERED FEW CONCRETE ASSURANCES OF POSITIVE ACTION AGAINST CORRUPT ELEMENTS. INDEED, THE VICE PRESIDENT APPEARED TO LEAVE MUCH OF THE INITIATIVE IN EXPOSING CORRUPTION ON THE PEOPLE. HIS THREATS AGAINST FALSE ACCUSERS WERE MORE NUMEROUS, FORCEFUL AND CONCRETE THAN WERE HIS PROMISES OF PROTECTION FOR THOSE WHOSE ACCUSATIONS SHOULD PROVE TRUE. HIS SPEECH IS UNLIKELY TO OVERCOME POPULAR FEELINGS THAT THE GVN ACCEPTS CORRUPTION AS AN INEVITABLE PART OF THE SYSTEM. AT THE SAME TIME IT OFFERS LITTLE HOPE THAT THE PROBLEMS WHICH HIS CHIEF AIDE MG NGUYEN VAN HIEU RECENTLY DESCRIBED TO AN EMBOFF (SAIGON A-42, MAR 5, 1973) WILL BE REMEDIED. AS A PUBLIC ADMISSION OF THE EXISTENCE OF CORRUPTION, THIS SPEECH WOULD APPEAR TO OBLIGE THE ADMINISTRATION TO EXPOSE AND PROSECUTE SOME CASES OR RISK A FURTHER DECLINE IN PUBLIC CREDENCE IN ITS PROMISES TO ACT AGAINST OFFICIAL MALEFACTORS.

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